



Congressional Affairs Support Annex

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

This annex provides guidance on congressional liaison activities in support of the Federal Government's response to a major disaster or emergency requiring Federal assistance. Under the Federal Response Plan (FRP), the purpose of the congressional liaison function is to coordinate the dissemination of information to Members and committees of Congress and advise agency officials of congressional concerns, anticipated congressional action, and legislative developments.

B. Scope

This annex applies to all agencies with responsibilities under the FRP.

II. Policies

- A. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will coordinate its congressional liaison activities with other FRP agencies to ensure consistency of the "Federal message" throughout the response.
- B. Staffing in support of congressional liaison activities in the field will be determined in part by the number of States and congressional districts affected.
- C. Each Federal agency will designate a congressional relations specialist in Washington, DC, as required.
- D. In a large-scale or catastrophic disaster, each Emergency Support Function (ESF) primary agency may deploy at the request of DHS a Congressional Affairs Representative (CAR) to the field.

III. Planning Assumptions

- A. There will be immediate and continuous demand from Members of Congress for information on the impact, magnitude, and damage resulting from the disaster.
- B. Initial reports of damage may be fragmented and provide an incomplete picture of the extent of the damage. This will adversely affect the ability to provide timely information to Members of Congress in the initial stages of the disaster response.
- C. The State will generally be the most authoritative source of vital information regarding damage and initial response needs.

IV. Concept of Operations

A. General

1. Effective congressional liaison requires integrated and mutually supportive action by the following DHS congressional affairs staff:
 - a. Congressional Relations Officer (CRO), designated by DHS. The CRO is located at DHS Headquarters (HQ) and is a member of the Emergency Support Team (EST);
 - b. Congressional Liaison Officer (CLO), located with the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) at the Disaster Field Office (DFO); and
 - c. Deputy Congressional Liaison Officer (DCLO), located in the Joint Information Center (JIC) or the Congressional Affairs Office at the DFO if necessary.
2. Integrated Federal interaction with the Congress requires a coordinated interagency congressional liaison effort:
 - a. At the HQ level, the DHS CRO will conduct daily coordination sessions, if necessary, with congressional liaison staff from each Federal agency involved; and
 - b. In a large-scale or catastrophic disaster, FRP primary agencies may deploy a CAR to the field at the request of DHS. Each CAR will work at the DFO under the direction of the DHS DCLO. The CAR is responsible for monitoring all Federal activities for that ESF, providing appropriate information to the affected congressional offices, and responding to incoming congressional inquiries.

B. Organization

1. National-Level Response Structure

- a. The CRO will provide congressional relations support to the Catastrophic Disaster Response Group (CDRG) and the EST. The CRO will have primary responsibility for coordinating all congressional events in the Washington, DC, area pertaining to the disaster response and recovery operations. The CRO will:
 - (1) Serve as primary congressional liaison advisor to DHS HQ response officials;
 - (2) Support the efforts of the congressional liaison activities in the field;
 - (3) Coordinate the timing and content of information to Washington, DC, congressional offices;
 - (4) Serve as a conduit for information requests received by DHS in Washington, DC, from congressional offices;
 - (5) Coordinate the flow of information between DHS and the Federal response and recovery effort;

- (6) Coordinate with the Washington, DC, congressional liaisons of other Federal agencies to ensure consistency of the Federal message and logistical coordination;
 - (7) Provide input through DHS to the White House Legislative Affairs Office on overall Federal congressional relations; and
 - (8) Coordinate, within DHS and among the Federal agencies, information pertaining to legislative developments (such as hearings) or background material for special legislation.
- b. The DHS Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs will serve as primary congressional liaison advisor to DHS HQ response and recovery officials. This office will:
- (1) Provide logistical support to the CRO;
 - (2) Answer incoming inquiries from congressional offices;
 - (3) Assist the CRO in developing written materials for presentations and making congressional notifications; and
 - (4) Receive information from the CRO and electronically provide data to congressional affairs officers of the involved agencies.

2. Field-Level Response Structure

- a. The CLO will deploy from DHS and will report to the FCO. Collocated with the FCO, the CLO will manage Federal congressional liaison activities in the field. The CLO will:
- (1) Serve as primary congressional liaison advisor to the FCO and DHS on-site response officials;
 - (2) Manage congressional liaison staff and operations in the field;
 - (3) Serve as congressional liaison on the Emergency Response Team (ERT);
 - (4) Support congressional liaison activities in Washington, DC, and serve as primary contact for the HQ CRO in the field;
 - (5) Coordinate congressional and other dignitary trip requirements generated from both Washington, DC, and the field;
 - (6) Coordinate with other Federal agency personnel to ensure consistency of the Federal message;
 - (7) Provide information to the HQ CRO for reports to the White House Legislative Affairs Office on Federal congressional relations for the disaster response;
 - (8) Coordinate with the FCO in the development of policy and its impact on the congressional delegation;

- (9) Serve as a base for background information on Members of Congress and their previous experiences with the Federal agencies during disasters; and
- (10) Develop strategies for the FCO on issues and impediments regarding the delivery of Federal programs during disasters.
- b. The DCLO will report to the CLO. The DCLO will establish operations at the discretion of the FCO or CLO in either the JIC or the Congressional Affairs Office in or near the disaster area and will:
 - (1) Manage Federal congressional liaison operations for the CLO;
 - (2) Monitor events in the JIC and DFO to keep the CLO current;
 - (3) Ensure prompt notification to congressional offices of significant events, including coordinating the timing and content of information;
 - (4) Serve as a conduit for information requests received by DHS in the field from congressional offices; and
 - (5) Manage inquiry and notification tracking systems.
- c. In a large-scale or catastrophic disaster, a CAR may be deployed if necessary by each ESF primary agency to the disaster site. (The DCLO will interface with ESF #5 — Information and Planning.) Each CAR will report to the DCLO. The CAR will:
 - (1) Monitor the activities of the primary and support agencies of the CAR's ESF;
 - (2) Make congressional notification calls, in conjunction with the DCLO;
 - (3) Respond to congressional inquiries pertaining to ESF areas of responsibility; and
 - (4) Provide support and congressional feedback to the DCLO.

C. Response Actions

1. Headquarters Level

a. Congressional Relations Officer

(1) Initial Actions

- (a) Establish immediate priorities based on information about the extent and impact of damage, State request(s) for assistance, the scope of Federal efforts, congressional offices representing the affected area, and staffing of response operations at DHS HQ, the DFO, and other field locations in conjunction with the DHS Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs.

- (b) Establish a system for keeping the DHS Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs informed on issues and the progress of response and recovery operations.
- (c) Establish contact with congressional offices representing affected areas to provide information on the DHS mission and activities, the Federal-State relationship in recovery operations, and where to obtain information on Federal activities and the daily congressional briefing.
- (d) Provide profiles of Members and feedback from contacts with congressional offices to the EST Director.
- (e) Establish and monitor tracking systems for open requests from congressional offices and blanket notifications.
- (f) Serve as contact with HQ CROs from other Federal agencies and maintain channels of communication through daily meetings and conference calls.
- (g) Organize an initial interagency congressional briefing within 18 hours of the event and conduct daily briefings thereafter. (Briefings need not be open to the press.) The target audience is Members and staff from any congressional office representing the affected area, and staffs from committees for appropriations, disaster relief, and authorization.
- (h) Work with agency Public Affairs Officers (PAOs), including actions such as obtaining all press releases and schedules of JIC press conferences, exchanging pertinent response and recovery information, etc.

(2) Continuing Actions

- (a) Coordinate Federal information to support legislative initiatives.
- (b) Present information to committee staff through the Director, DHS Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs, in support of agency legislative requests.
- (c) Arrange field trips for Members of Congress and staff. Coordinate with the CDRG, EST Director, congressional liaisons from other Federal agencies, DHS Office of Emergency Information and Media Affairs, and DHS CLO.
- (d) Conduct daily conference calls and/or briefings with congressional liaisons of other Federal agencies to review notifications and developments (field and HQ) of the past 24 hours, coordinate congressional interagency briefings, and identify information needs, including congressional requests for testimony or legislative technical assistance.

- (e) Conduct briefings for Members of Congress and their staffs as required.
- (f) Coordinate summary reports of Federal congressional relations activities for the White House Legislative Affairs Office.
- (g) Manage the flow and timing of release of congressional affairs information between HQ and the DFO.

b. Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs

(1) Initial Actions

- (a) Compile lists (e.g., telephone, fax, Internet, address) of congressional offices representing the area affected by the disaster.
- (b) Make logistical arrangements for daily congressional briefings on Capitol Hill.
- (c) Verify list of Federal agency personnel assigned to perform disaster recovery congressional relations.
- (d) Collect information to communicate to the field (e.g., biographies of Members, maps of congressional districts, historical data on districts).

(2) Continuing Actions

- (a) Distribute information to CLOs in the field (DHS and other Federal agencies).
- (b) Track, respond to, and/or assist in congressional inquiries and notifications.
- (c) Attend JIC press conferences.
- (d) Maintain constant communications with the CLO, DCLO, CRO, and DHS Office of Emergency Information and Media Affairs to ensure timely exchange of information.

2. Field Level

a. Congressional Liaison Officer

Initial and continuing response actions of the CLO include:

- (1) Obtain information on impact of disaster, damage assessments, State requests for assistance and areas requested, anticipated Federal response and agencies involved, immediate problems and priority issues, logistical information on the JIC and DFO operations, etc.;
- (2) Discuss with the FCO congressional priorities and congressional involvement to date, CRO operations, expected level of involvement by the FCO in congressional matters, etc.;

- (3) Contact and work with the DHS CRO, PAO on site, regional congressional point of contact, and congressional offices representing the affected area;
- (4) Develop an operations plan to cover priorities, staffing (including the DCLO's role in the JIC/DFO), and a daily strategy for proactive congressional liaison;
- (5) Establish and monitor systems to obtain information for Members of Congress, track incoming congressional inquiries and notifications, and determine reporting requirements;
- (6) Meet with the DCLO and ESF CARs to review congressional relations strategy, operations, etc.;
- (7) Within 18 hours of setup and with the participation of the FCO, conduct an initial briefing of Members of Congress and their staffs on the Federal role, Federal-State relationship, what can be expected from the Federal Government, and the role of the congressional offices in recovery. Include priorities, accomplishments to date, anticipated actions, Federal-State-local operations, process for accepting donations, contact for 24-hour notification, etc.;
- (8) Provide to the FCO summaries on Members affected (including expected level of their involvement), impact on their districts and other significant issues, biographical sketches of Members (including their affiliation, term in office, major committee assignments and leadership positions, and location of district offices);
- (9) Maintain logs of CLO/DCLO actions and provide summary information to the FCO and DHS HQ;
- (10) Schedule daily coordination meetings with the PAO and attend FCO meetings with other Federal agencies (including ERT meetings);
- (11) Develop itineraries and coordinate logistics with FCO staff, other Federal agency representatives, State staff, and the PAO in preparation for visits by Members and staffs; and
- (12) Monitor rumor control activities and outreach feedback and take appropriate action.

b. Deputy Congressional Liaison Officer

Initial and continuing response actions of the DCLO include:

- (1) On arriving at the disaster scene, contact the CLO to be briefed on all aspects of the operation to date, strategies, procedures, etc.;
- (2) Set up operations in the JIC or Congressional Affairs Office as directed by the CLO, ensuring space and equipment are ready for operations;

- (3) Develop a plan of operations (including priorities, staffing, the DCLO's role in the JIC or Congressional Affairs Office, congressional follow up resulting from JIC conferences, etc.);
- (4) Develop procedures to obtain public information as soon as it is cleared by the JIC, as well as "canned" and new information developed by Federal agencies;
- (5) Establish and maintain a tracking system for congressional inquiries and notification, log of CLO actions taken, filing system (by Member) to collect information for use in profiles and background, etc.;
- (6) In coordination with the CAR(s) and Deputy PAO, prepare timely factsheets for use by Members' offices; and
- (7) Prepare summary reports and submit daily to the CLO.

c. Congressional Affairs Representative

Initial and continuing actions of agency CARs include:

- (1) Supporting the DCLO in establishing priorities, preparing notification statements for DCLO approval, making congressional notification calls, providing feedback on congressional reaction, etc.;
- (2) Establishing contact with operational staff or ESF agencies and monitoring ESF activities;
- (3) Maintaining input to congressional inquiry and notification tracking systems; and
- (4) Responding in a timely fashion to congressional inquiries pertaining to the ESF of responsibility.